

A NATURAL RESOURCES CAREER RETROSPECTIVE

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Field of Natural Resources

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Herbert E. Doig was born and raised in Trumansburg, NY where his love for all things Fish and Wildlife was born. He graduated from Cornell University in 1956 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources. He went on to spend a forty-year career with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in roles with increasing responsibility, retiring as Deputy Commissioner. A career highlight for Herb was being awarded the Seth Gordon Award by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies in recognition of his lifetime achievements in working steadfastly and effectively for the best use of North American natural resources and the public trust therein. Herb also served Cornell University in advisory roles for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the School of Veterinary Medicine.

Herb and his wife Susan (Cornell class of 1958 with a dual BS/RN degree) have five children – Julie McPeck (Cornell '83), Geoffrey Doig-Marx (SUNY Empire State '18), Amy Cullen (Cornell '88), Scott Doig (Springfield College PhD '18), and James Doig (Cornell '03). They enjoy spending time with their 11 grandchildren and traveling the US.

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INTRODUCTION – HOW MY PAST EDUCATED MY FUTURE

The Early Years - The rural setting of Central New York fostered an interest in fish and wildlife that led to a career in wildlife conservation. This interest was nurtured by one of my General Science teachers who taught an appreciation for the natural world and the organisms that occupied it. Being raised in small town ten miles north of Ithaca, there was an opportunity to gain appreciation for the local wildlife and the habitats that supported it. As a boy in Trumansburg, NY, 200 yards from my home was a beanery that I would visit regularly to observe the local pheasant population and other birds that fed on the waste from the beanery. Adjacent was a small marsh that fostered my interest in wetlands' wildlife and the rural setting including ring neck pheasants and other game birds. I would follow a flock of pheasants through the back fields of local farms, curious as to their habits and natural history. At the same time, I would slog around the marsh observing the local fauna. An interest in songbirds was nurtured by a bird feeder at our home with a grandfather who enjoyed wild birds and had a very active bird feeder himself.

As time went by, my interest in the natural world increased, and I followed that interest by applying to the Wildlife program at Cornell, as well as the Forestry and Wildlife program at Syracuse University. I was accepted to both schools, but my family had a legacy at Cornell, with my father an alum and my brother a student at

Cornell. I chose to attend the Wildlife program at my father's alma mater. Professor Oliver Hewitt stoked my interest along with Dr. Raney in Fisheries throughout my four years. My passion continued to be nurtured by Dr. Fisher in Rural Education, who taught a course in Natural History.

During the first summer of my college career, I worked on a farm in Worcester, NY to earn farm credit that was required at that time in the Agriculture school at Cornell. The second summer I went to Olean as a temporary foreman working on the small marsh program in the NYS Conservation Dept. I spent the early part of the summer at Camp Rushford, living in the barracks, staying with the teenagers there specializing in Wildlife program. I taught a wildlife identification course the first night of camp to pre-teens with interests like mine at the same age. During the day I worked with the labor staff building small marshes scattered throughout the Olean area. This included plain surveying, construction of spillway boxes and other water control structures.

I served in the armed forces for an artillery camp, as other students in ROTC also did to serve their military commitment. Because of that during the third summer of my college years I spent six weeks at Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma. There I took part in the supervision of troops, preparing me for future personnel and community management duties at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC).

A Career Begins - After graduation from Cornell, I returned to a job in Olean, NY thanks to contacts I made during my summer internships. My first job with NYSDEC was as a temporary Conservation Foreman, which included everything from turkey surveys and trapping, to deer check stations. I also attended Sportmen's Federation meetings and "held down the fort" in the Olean Fish and Wildlife Office. I created the Trap and Transfer Turkey Program, which included live trap and transfer of turkeys in the wild, and release in suitable areas both in the state and adjacent states. This was the first time this type of program was implemented, and it was very successful - the released birds expanded the range of wild turkeys throughout the Northeast. The wild trap birds were of higher quality in comparison to the game farm raised birds originally populating the state from Pennsylvania. We then transferred the wild stock to neighboring states to establish populations there which helped to foster a spirit of cooperation between fish and wildlife agencies.

My first permanent appointment came with a position in the NYSDEC Poughkeepsie office as a Conservation Biologist. I ran a deer check station going into NYC, working with the State Troopers along the NYS Thruway. We would age the deer as well as check any other information we were keeping at that time. Most of the deer came from the Catskill Mountains and the information was sent to Albany, NY for analysis. While in Poughkeepsie, we established the Putnam County Cooperative

Hunting area and contacted the conservation officers for a similar area in Columbia county.

I then returned to Cornell University for an assistantship, taking advantage of a one-year leave of absence from NYSDEC. My focus for my master's work was Wildlife Management and Extension, working with Professor Hewitt. I took courses in Ichthyology and Botany as well as other Natural Resource subjects but left 4 credits shy of my master's degree due the end of my assistantship. I completed two more credit hours while working in Cortland at the DEC office there.

With two credit hours to go, I was offered a permanent position with the Department as a Regional Wildlife Manager in Watertown, NY. In Region 6, I was responsible for wetlands management and construction, as well as making contacts with Sportsman's Federations. I also managed deer check stations and land acquisition to provide access to flood control projects and land adjacent to existing wildlife lands.

I was then contacted by the Department to take a new position in Albany, NY as a Fish and Wildlife Management Act Coordinator. While there, I took my first foray into long range planning for the Department for programs in Fish and Wildlife as well as a broader Natural Resources context.

Developing as a Leader - In Albany I was on the division staff supervising biologists. In this role I became focused more on the direction of programs vs. the implementation of them, a common theme through the balance of my career. When I first arrived in Albany I was working as the Fish and Wildlife Management Act Coordinator, focused on strengthening relationships between the sporting public, land owners and the department. The Fish and Wildlife Management Act was a pioneering program where the Department, sportsman's organizations, local government and the general public came together to plan for public use of wildlife resources and to provide access to those resources through cooperative agreements. In my role as coordinator I focused on long range strategy and program planning, offering guidance on the overall fish and wildlife program while serving as the liaison between the department and the various stakeholders. My experience with public and private stakeholder cooperation continued in my role as Chief Wildlife Biologist. There I was responsible for administering wildlife programs on a statewide basis which included propagation programs for game farms used to stock pheasants, quail, and Hungarian partridge for hunting purposes on both private and public land.

When I was appointed Division Director of Fish and Wildlife my focus turned to the planning of programs focused on preservation of habitats and public use of resources. An ensuing promotion into the executive offices as Assistant Commissioner followed. This was a new role created to bring together the interests of natural resources

stakeholders at an executive level. I served as a liaison with citizen groups such as Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, State Forest Practice Board and the State Fish and Wildlife Management Board who gave valuable insight and support to the department to help us reach our mutual objectives. In my capacity as Assistant Commissioner I spent the bulk of my time looking broadly across all the divisions of DEC to give a central focus to the state's natural resource programs in total vs. a focus on fish and wildlife separately. Here my primary contacts were with the legislature and other executive level government agencies vs. the sporting public. I worked with legislative committees on legislation that fostered natural resource programs and recognized that this is where I could do my best work. While not being "in the field", I appreciated my ability to influence natural resource programs on a statewide basis.

In my capacity as Assistant Commissioner I realized that the overarching focus on statewide programs to manage our natural resources could be extended beyond our state borders. I was elected President of the International Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, which included representatives of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in all 50 states, Canada and Mexico. Our goal through this organization was to bring together natural resource agencies nationwide in the spirit of collaboration on coordinated programs across states, while providing mechanisms to get the job done. Our activities focused on shared learning, ideas and program application on the

ground in each jurisdiction. This enabled me to apply the great work being done in NYSDEC to the broader organization.

Through the years it became apparent that one of my key strengths was the ability to work with a broad variety of people and really understand their individual agendas, leaderships styles and career journeys. I subscribed to the concept of “servant leadership” - providing guidance and teaching where necessary in a way that made sense to the individual and empowered them to do the same. In this way I gained the trust of the constituents in and out of NYSDEC and was able to provide a platform for servant leadership throughout the organization. This propensity for servant leadership really began with my upbringing and early life and career experiences. I developed a certain credibility through those experiences that lent credence to the guidance I was providing to employees and stakeholders alike. By gaining people’s respect in this way, I was able to set clear goals for myself and my organization and then lead the stakeholders along a common path.

PUTTING MY EXPERIENCE TO WORK

Public Access to Private Lands - Over time public interest in natural resources increased, providing new avenues for public participation in natural resources. The

New York State Fish and Wildlife Management Act was passed by the Legislature in 1957 for two major purposes:

- 1) to encourage the preservation and development of fish and wildlife resources on privately-owned lands and waters, and
- 2) to improve public recreational access to these resources.

Because of the bill's passage it became necessary to establish a protocol for how the legislation would work in an organized way. Prior to the passage of the Act, landowners were posting signage on their lands trying to keep people away, resulting in many contentious issues that needed to be resolved. Thus, the focus of the department's activities was to protect wildlife on private lands and to provide the public an opportunity for utilization of these resources in an organized and respectful manner. Our first reaction was to tightly regulate the interaction. In Putnam County we developed a public hunting area with fairly tight controls: people would take their hunting licenses to get a permit to go into the field to hunt. In Columbia County, a conservation officer came to me with an offer to establish a cooperative hunting area without all the controls that we established in Putnam County. His recommendation was this - provide safety zone signage for landowners to post around their property but require no formal registration process. Importantly the program execution was flexible - where you needed to have tight control you could apply it but that control wasn't required. Response to this compromise was overwhelmingly positive. It

resulted in increasing the amount of private lands available for public hunting and fishing, which then provided access to deer populations which otherwise weren't available, aiding in deer herd management.

Throughout my career I have found that flexibility is important when working with different constituencies. I believe that a compromise in this case worked because multiple interests—both public and private—were represented in the solution. Prior to this program, sportsmen had a general feeling that government was trying to control them. The government conversely needed the private land owners to comply with land usage needs. This program helped to alleviate the pressure that had built up over years with public use of private lands by helping to put the feeling of control back into the hands of the landowner thereby increasing compliance.

When administering this program, I was able to anticipate fears that various constituencies – both public and private - might have and then mold the program to make sure that those fears didn't materialize. I developed credibility throughout my career with the experience I garnered and contacts I made through my many assignments, so I was in a good position to influence how people felt about the program. To continue that positive influence, I saw a need to implement a marketing program that would serve two purposes – one to increase outside funding for these types of programs on an ongoing basis, and the second to continue to develop

goodwill amongst both private and public constituents to ensure the success of programs like these for years to come.

Put and Take Stocking – As Director of Fish and Wildlife, I coordinated this program to serve two purposes. The first stage of the program was focused on the “put” – establishing species popular with hunters into new habitats throughout the state. Over time the program evolved to focus on the “take” – increasing the opportunity for public hunting by releasing the established species prior to public hunting season. The program began with a focus on three bird species – pheasants, quail and partridge. These species were game farm raised then transferred to the wild with varying degrees of success in getting them established. The pheasant population very quickly moved from a “put” program to a “take” program for several reasons. Pheasants are versatile feeders – they typically feed on corn/waste from farm fields in wintertime - unlike quail or grouse that feed on small seed. They are also a larger bird and thus less vulnerable to harsh winters or predators like hawks. Initially, quail were introduced into traditional habitats along the Hudson and Long Island, but they only survived successfully on Long Island since the climate there was more moderate and food supply more plentiful. In other areas of the state with harsher winters, the quail habitat was limited, and the quail could not survive on an ongoing basis

Ultimately the Put and Take program moved away from quail and partridge to wild turkey. Turkeys more closely resembled the pheasant scenario – larger, hardier birds with varied food sources and fewer predators. One key difference in this scenario though was that the turkeys were live trapped from the wild and their range expanded by moving them to new habitat. This difference was very important as we found that the wild birds were much better able to sustain themselves in the natural habitat vs. game farm raised birds. Thus began the prototype for the Put and Take program.

By supplementing the game bird population in NYS, the Put and Take program ultimately provided an opportunity for the public to be successful in harvesting stocked birds (both wild trapped and game farm raised) and increasing their enjoyment of the hunting experience. This program was a change from the past because prior to this time, there wasn't a sustainable stock of birds in the field in large enough numbers to allow sportsmen to hunt these birds successfully. Through the implementation of the Put and Take Stocking program we learned several lessons that were reapplied in future program updates:

1. Game birds that were released in the wild were looked upon as hunting targets vs. trying to establish an ongoing, healthy bird population that could reproduce. Because of this difference in desired outcomes between sportsmen and the department, overhunting or dying out of species (due to predators, bad weather, and shortage of food supply) could result.

2. Game farm raised birds were not as hardy as wild birds and would generally not survive the winter. For pheasants, we released males only as males were the most attractive birds and thus favored by sportsmen. Most birds outside of Long Island would not survive the winter and thus hunting could not be maintained at the levels that sportsmen expected.
3. There continued to be somewhat of a disconnect between department needs and sportsmen objectives for the program. The sportsmen focused mainly on an increase in stocking and not on the other issues related to this practice. Ultimately sportsmen became satisfied with the stock birds being provided vs. solidifying a natural, wild bird population. In some cases, they shifted their interest to other species like wild turkeys and waterfowl.

Because of the above-mentioned challenges, our goal became a reduction in the dependence on Put and Take wildlife management. Implementation of the program was expensive, and the cost/benefit ratio was very high. Our move away from Put and Take was not necessarily popular with the sportsmen public, so we began a series of meetings with sportsmen federations through the years. The focus of these meetings was an overall discussion around the taking of wildlife and management of the wildlife populations. Sportsmen groups were focused on the stocking of thousands of birds for hunting purposes, but the game farms couldn't accommodate their demand. The department had a need to maintain an opportunity for hunting but

in a financially feasible way and at the right harvest rate. The result – the program continued but on a smaller scale. There were instances where it still worked. Quail and Hungarian Partridge – while they were not able to take up permanent residence due to their inability to overwinter – were stocked by specific game farms every fall. Other species like pheasants were able to self-sustain and were taken out of the Put and Take program.

Based on my prior experience in working with sportsmen groups throughout my career, I realized that it was necessary to gain their confidence which ultimately resulted in their ongoing support of our plan. While the support was reluctant at times, it was there none the less, likely a result of the time I took to understand their objectives and my ability to communicate the objectives of the department. This type of deep, working relationship with sportsmen groups was important not only for the Put and Take Stocking programs but for most programs the Department managed that involved the sporting public. I believe that the reduction in the overall size of Put and Take was a natural evolution of the program for all the right reasons - ultimately, we were able to maintain a hunting opportunity for sportsmen where it didn't otherwise exist while at the same time maintaining bird populations at healthy levels throughout the state.

NYS DEC Outreach

Interdepartmental in NYS - As Assistant Commissioner, I had responsibility for lands and forest as well as fish and wildlife. I organized an interdepartmental conference where forestry staff and fish and wildlife staff were brought together to get a feel for the others' programs in the spirit of collaboration. The goal was to create the opportunity for them to be conversant on various programs administered by the department, not just those in their specific functions. These staff included rangers, biologists, foresters and technicians and we met in Syracuse at the College of Environmental Science and Forestry in a conference designed to bring them all together. Prior to this conference each function was working in the field but never interacted with the other. They were very focused on their individual job function. At these meetings we focused on orienting each function to the other. After the meetings the various functions would work together in the field continuing the work they started in the meeting. In doing this we improved the efficiency of the department by enabling each function to do more with department resources. Now when one function was short staffed they could call on each other for assistance – we became a well-oiled machine.

This collaboration was successful because there was an attitude of cooperation among the participants and a common interest in the purpose of the effort. Many were

college graduates of Natural Resource programs, so they could understand each other's backgrounds and perspectives and it gave them a chance to work together and understand each other's role in the common goal. In getting field people to work together, it allowed them to communicate better in the field and work together on programs important to the Department as a whole, instead of focusing entirely on each individual division's mission. These meetings still take place today on multiple levels and the goal continues to be the fostering of interdepartmental cooperation. Meeting schedules differ – some teams meet weekly – with outside speakers brought in to highlight new initiatives.

Inter-State Agency Cooperation - During my time as Division Director, we worked to create cooperation among state agencies. The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies was charged with fostering cooperation between all state and federal agencies with responsibility for fish and wildlife management. This Association developed a set of overall wildlife guidelines to provide consistency among the various agencies in application of resource management programs. Through this communication, we were able to avoid duplication of effort between states and work toward common goals. One project we focused on was waterfowl regulation. The US Fish and Wildlife Service would do surveys of waterfowl breeding grounds in all fifty states as migration patterns of waterfowl typically cross state boundaries. If there were good years for breeding offspring then they could relax their hunting season

requirements, the aim being to get the waterfowl hunting seasons consistent across state boundaries. Conference discussions primarily took the form of “negotiations” where various state agencies, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service discussed equitable shares of resource usage and hunting opportunities amongst participating states. While each state was responsible for the regulation of domestic, non-migratory species within their boundaries, the US Fish and Wildlife service had responsibility for the distribution of harvest for migratory species as they crossed state boundaries.

There were many considerations that went into defining fair and equitable guidelines across state agencies. With regard to waterfowl, hunting seasons would vary depending on the weather. Weather significantly affected breeding ground success which then led to longer or shorter hunting seasons. Poor breeding patterns would also affect migration patterns. If breeding seasons were favorable, then there would be wider migration routes. If there were fewer birds due to a poor breeding season, then they would typically take the most traveled routes along the Great Lakes and the rivers.

This environment of collaboration with the US Fish and Wildlife Service was especially important in NYS in that most waterfowl came from areas outside the state and Canada. The birds would fly in different patterns around the state which led to

some complexity for hunting seasons and bag limits. The department had to work closely with the US service due to the complexity of these migratory patterns to be fair and equitable. Once this approach was defined and program considerations were understood starting with waterfowl, we reapplied our learning and guidelines to other programs, an example being the salmon fisheries in the Great Lakes. By having common seasons for fishing we were able to reduce conflicts between states in much the same way as the migratory waterfowl.

To foster further inter-state collaboration, the Department hosted a North American Wildlife Conference in Lake Placid. Governor Mario Cuomo traveled up to address the group and encouraged interstate cooperation and common regulations. The focus was on compatible seasons, common regulations on fish and wildlife management and cooperation among agencies. While this particular conference occurred every year and moved from state to state, NYS had a unique opportunity in that particular year and location as it followed the 1980 Olympics. The conference went a long way toward enhancing the leadership position of the NYS DEC equity in the minds of fellow professionals. This continued to nurture further collaboration between NYS and other states.

Partnerships with Higher Education - I was invited to serve on the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Advisory Committee, advising the Dean on

Natural Resource subject matter as well as other topics relating to the College. This position on the advisory council was a first step in recognizing the existence of a common interest between NYS DEC and higher education. This happened at the same time we were trying to build bridges between agencies. A similar advisory arrangement existed with the Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine. In this capacity we focused on issues of mutual interest. One specific example dealt with captive exotic wildlife e.g. keeping lions as pets. A key to this interaction was the existence of common goals. Both NYS DEC and Cornell were concerned that exotic wildlife represented the potential for introduction of disease into the natural habitats of New York State. In addition, some of the diseases carried by these exotic species could be transferred to agricultural habitats, thus infecting domestic stock. By working together both entities were able to draft regulations that limited the ability for the public to keep exotic wildlife as pets.

A similar partnership existed with SUNY ESF at Syracuse University. In this capacity we focused on shared wildlife management issues related to the preservation of habitat. SUNY ESF was interested in keeping wildlife populations at a correct level to produce forest products, including the planting/restocking of trees. Deer and other wildlife were doing damage to forest products. Biologists and Forestry staff on the ground would survey damage due to over browsing by deer. Deer would typically feed on new, younger shoots thus affecting forest production for years to come and

high populations of deer compounded the problem. When forest production was low that adversely affected food supply thus impacting deer herd size – a vicious cycle. Through a process of trial and error, NYS DEC, in collaboration with SUNY ESF, would increase or decrease the deer harvest to achieve a balance between deer herd size and forest production. This really became a collaboration that combined art and science based on observation and professional judgement of all involved to ensure the ongoing success of the forest product restocking services.

Stakeholder Management – Sportsmen’s organizations historically supported most of the NYS DEC projects and policies. They understood that programs such as the sale of hunting and fishing licenses inherently supported people who wanted to hunt and fish. The challenge came when the department didn’t have a program like that for non-game fish and wildlife groups. Animal rights organizations like PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) didn’t want money going to support the activities of hunting and fishing groups as those activities were fundamentally against what the organization stood for – stopping cruelty towards animals. PETA didn’t care what was done with the money as long as it didn’t support hunting and fishing programs. Dealing with animal rights organizations like PETA was difficult as it was sometimes hard to connect with them – they were not well organized. In addition, they became quite hostile at times; in fact, some of the groups were so difficult you just could not work with them. Ultimately, I had to focus on “Win-Win” negotiation

principles - evaluating what was most important to each group and trying to meet the desires of each group individually. For PETA that involved discussing endangered species release programs as well as public access programs that didn't require the taking of wildlife. I had regular meetings with sportsmen's groups and the connection there was a good one that had been in place for years. With the animal rights organizations I tried to diffuse their hostility by attending their meetings and working with the NYS legislature to get them to recognize the broader interests of wildlife management beyond just hunting and fishing. In the end, the overriding theme applied here with both constituencies – we focused on collaboration that became a combination of art and science involving the understanding and support of each group's individual agenda.

The Political Landscape

Keep Wildlife Wild – In the lower Hudson, a fawn was found, and a family there wanted to keep it as pet. This became a political issue when the department told the family that it was against department policy to keep a wild animal as a pet. The DEC Commissioner was a congressman however and chose to support the family vs. the department. In fact, he ordered the department to give the family a permit to keep the deer. This resulted in quite an internal battle where the department repeatedly pointed out the pitfalls of having people take wildlife as pets. Ultimately the

department was concerned that people would actively start looking for these animals and keep them in pens on their properties. This could lead to misconceptions about the values of wildlife and why it is important for animals to stay in the wild. Often animals die when kept in captivity like this – people don't know how to handle them, don't feed them properly, and don't care for them properly. Because of the Commissioner's actions the deer being kept by the family died after getting caught in a wooden frame cage. Adding insult to injury, when the deer died, the Commissioner sent his assistant down to attend the funeral for the deer. His actions gave people the message that it was OK to keep wild animals as pets and that we should treat them as such. Through his actions the Congressman reduced wildlife management into a political issue. Soon after the deer incident, the commissioner was replaced. The department began a PR campaign with the help of Cornell University and SUNY ESF to educate the public on why keeping wildlife as pets was not a good idea. It eventually became apparent that the general public in fact supported the DEC position to Keep Wildlife Wild.

Funding – Historically hunting and fishing license fee sources were the most reliable sources of money for NYS DEC. Additional funding came from federal aid programs through an excise tax from the sale of arms and ammunition. Even though department funding was relatively stable, a potential was there for ebbs and flows in funding depending on the political landscape and inflation. At periods in time

through my career hunting and fishing license fees were not providing the needed funds, especially during periods of high inflation. As a result, we needed to look for new sources of revenue. We developed two programs to help offset drops in funding:

- Return a Gift to Wildlife – NYS taxpayers could sign a statement on their income tax form that said they would contribute some of their tax money to fish and wildlife programs in the state. In effect the program was a type of volunteer giving platform that had been used successfully by Fish and Wildlife departments in other states. This became a lucrative form of enhanced funding as it was relatively easy to execute for both the individual donor and the department. Eventually the program was discontinued when other state departments saw this approach as a way to get incremental funding. While DEC was the first department to execute this giving platform, other groups became jealous and wanted a program of their own. To address the infighting the state shut down the Return a Gift to Wildlife, forcing DEC to explore other incremental funding options.
- NYS Duck Stamp Program – This program was patterned after the National Duck Stamp program. This funding was unique in that it came from a contributor source vs. the state tax forms. Contributors would buy the stamps voluntarily and the money would go into a dedicated fund. The money went to specific programs within the department for fish and wildlife management

programs. This program succeeded in part due to tremendous support from sportsmen's organizations.

Lessons Learned

Know Your Audience – Deeply understanding your audience and what motivates them was crucial to my success. Whether the audience was a sportsmen's group, animal rights group, upper level management or another state agency, it was important to get to know them, what was important to them and what their desired goals were. This is really something that happens over time – I developed these relationships throughout my career. Starting in Olean, moving to Watertown, and finishing in Albany, I had a lot of positions along the way where I developed many meaningful relationships. It was important to continue to nurture these relationships through the years. I did this in several ways - meetings with the various constituencies, getting to know them and their organizations, and having them get to know me. On trips into the field I made it a point to have dinner with the various groups. It became a matter of constant interaction with people in the areas where I was working. Eventually these relationships became friendships that resulted in shared respect.

Within DEC “knowing your audience” became important both in managing up through the chain of command and managing down through my organization. By knowing what was important to both my managers as well as my subordinates and developing a program where we all shared in its success, the work became something that everyone identified with. The program effectively “became theirs”.

“Open” Leadership Style – I really developed my “open” leadership style in college by participating in as much as I could along the way through my attendance at a variety of meetings and participation in several clubs and organizations. Throughout my career I found that many people had a difficult time accepting the abilities of others and giving them recognition where it was due. I believed otherwise and was always open to people who wanted to meet and discuss topics – encouraging an open dialogue and open relationships.

I felt especially strongly that it was my responsibility to help newer people in the organization. I would meet with my new employees on a regular basis to discuss a variety of issues facing us in NYS DEC. I would encourage them to develop new ideas and undertake new projects that benefited the department. Ultimately once those ideas were developed I would build those into whatever program I was working on. I ultimately shared the development of successful programs with others, letting the employee take the credit. In doing this I felt that it was important for people who

were buying into and administering programs to be a part of the program development and success – have a part of the action. This would in turn help them to be open to other's ideas. This open leadership style was really about teaching “give and take”, founded in the belief that everyone has something to contribute. It was important to make an opportunity for others to shine. There is no question in my mind that this approach gave us a better result as it made sure that everyone felt they were a part of the action. This open leadership style resulted in successful programs that were unique to NYS DEC vs. other parts of the country. My motto became “check your ego at the door; the recognition will follow”.

Flexibility – Throughout my career it became increasingly important as I rose through the ranks that I be willing to go with the flow and be flexible. Working in wildlife management inherently necessitates flexibility as there are so many things beyond our control. Factor into that the various personalities of employees and higher ups, other departments within and outside the state, political ideologies, etc. I had to be willing to take advantage of the abilities of others and their ideas, developing programs based on previous results and collaboration. I also had to be willing to admit that something wasn't working and pull back on that initiative. Part of that was the ability to understand why it wasn't working and make appropriate changes. I find that many times that is a challenge for managers – understanding when their idea isn't working and being willing to adjust by accepting the input of others.

In looking back on my forty-year career in natural resource management, I would call my career a partnership of sorts – a study in unity and developing relationships designed to move the NYS DEC programs forward. I consistently looked for the best ways to get the job done and provided recognition for those who contributed. It is important to note that none of this program development and my pursuit of a successful career was done in isolation. It was done with cooperation from many people, openness to good ideas, and mutual recognition.